

## AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

IN PAGE 7

IN LINE 1 BEGINNING WITH THE WORDS "FIGURE 4 illustrates ..." AND ENDING WITH THE WORDS "...target index." PLEASE AMEND THE SPECIFICATION WITH THE REPLACEMENT PARAGRAPH AS FOLLOWS:

FIGURE 4 illustrates a preform bundle of the present invention for providing a step-index optical fiber, wherein a cladding portion comprises a random distribution of glass rods each having either a higher or lower refractive index than a predetermined target refractive index such that the average cladding index equals the predetermined target index.

IN LINE 11 BEGINNING WITH THE WORDS "FIGURE 7 illustrates ..." AND ENDING WITH THE WORDS "...rare-earth-doped region." PLEASE AMEND THE SPECIFICATION WITH THE REPLACEMENT PARAGRAPH AS FOLLOWS:

FIGURE 7 illustrates a preform bundle of the present invention for providing a step-index optical fiber, wherein a cladding portion comprises a random distribution of glass rods each having either a higher or lower refractive index than a predetermined target refractive index, and additionally including a central core region containing a confined rare-earth-doped region.